Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings. of claims in the application.

1.   (Canceled)

2.   (Canceled)

3.   (Canceled)

4.   (Canceled)

5.   (Canceled)

6.   (Canceled)

7.   (Currently amended) The method according to claim 11 wherein said at least one function provided as part of said object includes **controlling an independent electronic mail application of said client to perform** electronic messaging with said business contact.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 11 wherein said object can be relocated to a desktop.

9.   (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 8 wherein said object on a desktop remains in communication with a server and is able to receive data from said server for updating messages, servers, or links associated with said object.

10.   (Canceled)

11.   (Previously Presented)   A method of providing interactive bi-directional connections between a business contact and a client comprising:

providing to a client a persistent interactive graphic object configured to establish an interactive, bi-directional connection between said client and a business contact;

providing, as part of said graphic object, at least one function that can be performed by said client; and

transmitting information from said business contact to said persistent

interactive graphic object.

12.   (Currently amended) A computer based method for providing interactive bi-directional communication between a business contact and a client comprising:

    providing to a client a persistent interactive graphic object configured to establish contact between said client and business contact; and

    wherein said interactive object is capable of ~~interfacing with~~ **controlling** at least two (2) **independent** computer programs on a single computer.

13.   (Previously Presented) The computer based method of Claim 12, wherein one computer program is an electronic mail program.

14.   (Previously Presented) The computer-based method of Claim 12 wherein said graphic object is at least partially controlled by at least one other computer.

15.   (Previously Presented) The computer based method of Claim 13 wherein said at least one other computer can change content within at least one computer program.

16.   (Previously Presented) A computer based method for providing a communications link between a business and a customer comprising the steps of:

    providing a persistent graphic interactive object that includes a tracking component, a communications component, and a security component on a host computer;

    allowing said customer to download said graphic object to a customer computer;

    displaying said graphic object for customer to view;

    linking said host computer to said customer computer via said graphic object; and

    establishing bi-directional communication with said customer using said link.

17.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of allowing said customer to use a pre-existing program on said computer to communicate with said business.

18.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17, wherein said computer program is an electronic mail program.

19.   (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 16 wherein said communications component allows a business to automatically update content within a pre-existing program on said customer's computer.

20.   (Currently amended) The method of Claim 16 wherein said tracking component **and said** communications component **[[and]]** **are controlled by said** security component ~~can be used interchangeably on a customer's computer~~ **to prevent unauthorized external access to said tracking component and said communications component**.

21.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 17 further comprising the step of linking at least two customer computers to each other via said host computer.

22.   (New) The method according to claim 11 wherein said at least one function provided as part of said object includes controlling an electronic mail application on said client.

23.   (New) The method according to claim 11 wherein said at least one function provided as part of said object includes controlling a web browsing application on said client.

24.   (New) The computer based method of Claim 12, wherein one computer program is a web browser program.

25.   (New) The method of claim 17, wherein said computer program is a web browser program.